

Chaldea. His ideas of eclipses and of the nature of the moon were sound, and his prediction of an eclipse of the sun, in particular, was attended with circumstances so remarkable as to have made it a matter of important investigation to modern astronomers. Anaxagoras, among a number of crude and imperfectly explained notions, speculated rationally enough on the cause of the winds and of the rainbow, and less absurdly on earthquakes than many modern geologists have done, and appears generally to have had his attention alive to nature, and his mind open to just reasoning on its phenomena; while Pythagoras, whether he reasoned it out for himself, or borrowed the notion from Egypt or India, had attained a just conception of the general disposition of the parts of the solar system, and the place held by the earth in it; nay, according to some accounts, had even raised his views so far as to speculate on the attraction of the sun as the bond of its union.

(99.) But the successors of these *bonâ fide* inquirers into nature debased the standard of truth; and taking advantage of the credit justly attached to their discoveries, renounced the modest character of learners, and erected themselves into teachers, and, to maintain their pretensions to this character, adopted the tone of men who had nothing further to learn. Unfortunately for true science, the national character gave every encouragement to pretensions of this kind. That restless craving after novelty, which distinguished the Greeks in their civil and political relations, pursued them into their philosophy. Whatever speculations were only ingenious and new had irresistible charms; and the teacher who could embody a clever thought in elegant language, or at once save his followers and himself the trouble of thinking or reasoning, by bold assertion, was too often induced to acquire cheaply the reputation of superior knowledge, snatch a few superficial notions from the most ordinary and obvious facts, envelope them in a parade of abstruse words, declare them the primary and ultimate principles of all things, and denounce as absurd and impious all opinions opposed to his own.

(100.) In this war of words, the study of nature was